

Residential Automobile Repair and Maintenance

Many people prefer to repair and maintain their vehicles at home. Those that do need to ensure that these activities do not pollute our streams, rivers, and lakes. Automobile maintenance and repair activities can introduce chemicals such as oil, grease, antifreeze, hydraulic and brake fluids, and metals to our surface and groundwater. A recent study estimated that the amount of oil running off our streets and driveways and ultimately flowing into the oceans is equal to an Exxon Valdez oil spill – 10.9 million gallons – every eight months (NRC, 2002).

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

The following best management practices (BMPs) or equivalent measures, methods, or practices are required if you engage in automobile repair and maintenance at your home.


 1

Collect all used oil, antifreeze, or other vehicle fluids in containers with tight fitting lids. Do not mix these fluids in the same container as this limits your ability to recycle the oil at your local auto parts store or service station.


 2

Never dispose of used oil, antifreeze, or other fluids into a storm drain, into a ditch, or onto the ground. Oil should be recycled at an auto parts store or service station. Other fluids can be disposed of at a household hazardous waste collection site. Call the household hazardous waste line at 206-296-4692 or see <http://www.govlink.org/hazwaste/house/products/list.cfm> for recycling and disposal information and locations.


 3

Never clean the engine or undercarriage of your vehicle at home. For this type of cleaning, take the vehicle to a commercial car wash facility.


 4

Use drip pans, tarps, or even cardboard and newspaper under the vehicle to capture leaks or spills that may occur during maintenance and repair activities. This ensures spilled fluids won't be washed to the storm drainage system the next time it rains.



Clean up spills with rags or absorbent material, such as sand, dirt, or cat litter. Do not wash down or hose down these spills to the curbs, roadway, or storm drains. Sweep up absorbents and dispose of them in your garbage can.



Store automotive parts, such as batteries, engines, transmissions, and other parts that may have oily or greasy residue on them, under cover and off the ground to minimize rainwater contact. Rainwater can wash pollutants off these parts and send pollutants to storm drainage systems and groundwater. Tarps are an inexpensive and easy solution to covering parts.

OTHER OPTIONS AND TIPS



Take your vehicle to a commercial car repair facility where fluids are handled, recycled and disposed of correctly to avoid pollutants being introduced to our local water bodies. The EnviroStars Program certifies businesses for reducing, recycling, and properly managing hazardous waste. See <http://www.envirostars.com/> to search for businesses that have earned the EnviroStars rating.

For more information or assistance in implementing these best management practices, contact the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks Water and Land Resources Division at 206-296-1900.